

**To:** Montgomery College Community

**From:** Dr. Charlene Mickens Dukes, Interim President

**Subject:** **Looking Forward to Our Time Together**

**Date:** August 5, 2021

Good morning, Raptors! As you likely know, on Monday I will begin serving as interim president of Montgomery College while the Board of Trustees undertakes a search for the next MC president. Responding to challenge has been at the core of my decades of higher education work, and this semester will be no different. The presidential search, the ongoing pandemic, and the transitions around hybrid teaching, working, and learning should provide all of us with opportunities to practice agility. I look forward to tackling them in partnership with each of you.

First to the presidential search: Board Chair Michael Knapp will share details about the search next week and the Board is currently setting up opportunities for engagement around the process. In addition to Chair Knapp's written communications, you can learn more about the search and how to participate directly from his upcoming remarks at the Fall Opening Meeting on August 23.

Second, the pandemic responses continue to be the focus of much local and national attention. As you know, staff are returning to onsite work two days a week this month—some for the first time. We expect that by the start of October all employees will have returned to provide the in-person instruction and services required by our students. This will depend, of course, upon coronavirus metrics in our region, which are, unfortunately, currently trending in the wrong direction. In response to these increases in COVID infections, the College re-instituted the mandatory face covering rule this week, in an effort to curb any potential spread inside our workplaces and classrooms. Of course, receiving a COVID-19 vaccination is the best defense against serious illness and death. According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC), being vaccinated—even with a very small number of breakthrough infections tied to a variant—is the most powerful step people can take to protect themselves and our community.

The health and safety of the College's students and employees will continue to guide our decision-making about operations as we move forward. As you may know, the Return to Campus Advisory Team (RTCAT) has met weekly during the summer to assess conditions and make recommendations to the senior vice presidents and chief of staff about College operations. For more details on operational questions vetted by the RTCAT, please explore [MC's website](#).

As the College moves into its next phase of teaching, learning, and working, it is strategically offering classes in formats that best respond to student needs. These needs may change in response to

employment, vaccination rates, technology growth, and other factors. The well-being of our community is paramount. Even as local health conditions continue to guide our decisions, the College's mission of providing high quality education in ways that empower students' lives must advance. A careful balance of these factors will continue to influence all of our decisions about the structure of our education programs and delivery of key services.

As we move into the fall semester, I will communicate with the entire College weekly on Monday mornings to share important news. While this may include COVID-19 updates, the primary source for such information continues to be the [MC website](#), with information on changes to operations or health protocols. If you missed [my video conversation](#) with Dr. DeRionne Pollard, please take a look and learn more about my Maryland higher education experience. I look forward to working with all of you as we embark upon a semester that will challenge us and will undoubtedly produce growth.